1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

Language and Communication

The division of Kaska speech into four mutually intelligible dialects has already been discussed in connection with the tribal differentiation of the Kaska nation. These languages belong to the Athapaskan stock and, like most of the divisions of that group, are tone languages.

In addition to understanding the speech of the members of other Kaska tribes, most people can also manage to understand non-Kaska speakers from surrounding areas who use more distinctive Athapaskan dialects. The mutual intelligibility of the dialects has probably contributed to reducing the need for any marginal language. Some men understand and can speak a little Chinook, but this jargon is never used within the community.

To whites and, to a lesser degree, among themselves, the Kaska speak a variety of English which follows some of the rules of that language but possesses distinctive features of its own. Thus, for example, the feminine gender is usually ignored and the pronouns "he" or "him" are sometimes applied to both sexes and neuter objects. In replying to a question employing the negative, "Yes" is largely used instead of "No." Thus, "You don't know that story?" is answered, "Yes," if the speaker wishes to indicate a lack of knowledge. In speaking English, the sound l is substituted for r by most adults. A few French words have entered the language; *merci* is sometimes used for "thanks" and the adjective *li* is occasionally employed for "the." Several Tlingit words (like *gukɬis* for "thank you") are also employed.

While orthography is of minor importance in this monograph, a brief statement of the signs used to represent some sounds occurring in the kinship terminology and elsewhere should be given. The vowels are:

i as in English *eat*
i as in English *it*
e front unrounded, somewhat like English *let*
æ as in English *hat*

Final vowels usually receive the weak stress found in the last sound of English *sofa*. A dot following other vowels than i indicates lengthening; in the case of i the dot signifies a high front unrounded vowel. The diphthong aj is pronounced as in English *my*.

Consonants are as in English, with some exceptions. The t is formed with the tongue against the lower teeth and is slightly voiced before most vowels. The dorsal lateral spirant l is pronounced as in the Welsh. Other consonants include the voiced and voiceless dorsal spirants, γ and x; the glottal stop, ʔ; the voiceless apical slit spirant θ, and the frontal spirants š and ž.

All of the data for the present study were collected in English, and, since some of this data has been published verbatim, some attention may be paid to the English vocabulary of the Kaska. The following list of words and phrases indicate the principal local usages developed for English words.

ANYBODY, *pron.* Everybody, as "anybody eat."
BOSS, *n.* A person who has the right to act upon, order, and care for an object, animal, place, or person, thus, "I'm boss for that woman."

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

104

PHONETIC KEY

VOWELS:

i as in English eat.
e as in English mate.
a as in German Mann.
u as in English soon.
ü as in German Küche.
ɔ as in English law.
Duplication indicates lengthening of the vowel.
( ) indicates subject to elision.

SEMIVOWELS:

j high front unrounded semivowel.
w high back rounded semivowel.

CONSONANTS:

θ voiceless coronal spirant, as in English thick.
ɬ voiceless lateral spirant.
x voiceless dorsal spirant.
ɣ voiced dorsal spirant.
c voiceless frontal spirant, as in English ship.
ʔ glottal stop.
Other consonants as in English.

_ indicates nasalization.
' accent (usually omitted).

Transcriptions are not phonemic and no doubt reflect a relatively poor ear for phonetic values.